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SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1902.

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THE STORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS.

THE passage of a bill, during the closing days of the last session of Congress, providing for the establishment of a National Bureau of Standards, came as a surprise to many. As the work of this bureau ought in the future to have a large bearing upon science and industry it may not be without interest to record the circumstances under which this legislation was effected, and to bring to the attention of those who in the future may be interested in the matter the names of a few men who, though not men of science, gave their time and labor heartily in the interest of this work. It has so happened that, although my own part in this has been very small, the circumstances have been known to me.

The National Bureau of Standards, as the new title reads, grew out of what has been called for many years the Office of Weights and Measures. In the early thirties large discrepancies were discovered in the weights and measures of the United States in the various custom-houses, and Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to establish a shop for the manufacture of uniform standards. In 1836 provision was made for similar standards for the different states, and the 'Office of Standard Weights and Measures' was established.